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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000893

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PTER PREL SP

SUBJECT: MADRID MARCH 11 BOMB ATTACKS: STATUS OF INVESTIGATION

Classified By: Carol Urban, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) The investigation into who perpetrated the March 11 attacks in Madrid continues, with an Al Qaeda link looking increasingly likely. While authorities cannot completely rule out responsibility by the terrorist group ETA, or a possible ETA role in coordination with an Islamic terrorist group, the current major line of investigation is Al Qaeda.

¶2. (C) Spanish authorities have detained five suspects, three Moroccan and two Indian citizens. All three Moroccans are said to have links to Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, who was indicted for his role as an alleged ringleader in Al Qaeda's organization in Spain. Authorities have reportedly linked the three to the attacks as a result of tracing the cell phone (the method used for detonation in the attacks) from one of the sportsbag bombs that did not detonate. The three Moroccans are Kamal ZOUGAM (other reported spelling: Kamal ZOUGAN)(DPOB: 05-OCT-1973, Tangiers, Morocco); Mohamed EL BEKKALI BOUTALIHA (DPOB: 05-JUN-1969, Achoura, Morocco); and Mohamed CHAQUI (other reported spelling: Mohamed CHAOUI)(DPOB: 26-JUN-1969, Tangiers, Morocco). All reportedly have police records and Zougam was named in Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzon's September 2003 indictment of Barakat Yarkas, though not indicted himself. Zougam reportedly ran an internet cafe with Chaqui, his half-brother.

¶3. (C) The two Indians arrested are Vinay KHOLY (other reported spelling: Vinay KOHLY)(DPOB: 11-JUN-1976, Jalandhar, India) and Suresh KAMAR (DPOB: 27-JAN-1972, Hoshiarpur, India). Press sources say they sold the telephones to the detained Moroccans.

¶4. (C) On March 13, Spanish authorities were advised of a videotape placed in a trash container near a prominent mosque, located near the major M-30 roadway in Madrid. The tape purportedly shows a masked spokesman, going by the name of Abu Dujan AL AFGANI, who claims responsibility for the attacks on behalf of Al Qaeda's military group in Europe. The man reportedly speaks Arabic with a Moroccan accent. Newspaper accounts state that high-level Moroccan security officials will travel to Spain to aid in the investigation.

¶5. (C) The Madrid Community Government reports that as of today, the death toll from the attacks stands at 200. They also list a total of 1,647 people treated for injuries, with 243 victims still hospitalized.

ARGYROS